

# Old Catalan

**Old Catalan** was the Romance variety spoken in territories that spanned roughly the territories of the Principality of Catalonia, the Kingdom of Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and the island of Sardinia; all of them then part of the Crown of Aragon.

Old Catalan, classified as an Occitano-Romance variety, is grouped with Old Occitan (also known as Old Provençal).<sup>[2]</sup>

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Old Catalan	
<i>catalanesch</i>	
Region	Principality of Catalonia, Kingdom of Valencia, Balearic islands, Sardinia
Era	evolved into Modern Catalan by the 16th century <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Indo-European<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Italic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Romance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Western<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gallo-Romance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Occitano-Romance<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Old Catalan</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Writing system	Latin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	<i>None</i>

## Phonology

### Consonants

Consonants of Old Catalan<sup>[3][4]</sup>

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental/ Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	
					<u>plain</u>	<u>labialised</u>
<u>Nasal</u>		<u>m</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>ɲ</u>	( <u>ŋ</u> )	
<u>Stop</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>t</u>		<u>k</u>	<u>kʷ</u>
	<u>voiced</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>d</u>		<u>g</u>	<u>gʷ</u>
<u>Affricate</u>	<u>voiceless</u>		<u>ts</u>	<u>tʃ</u>		
	<u>voiced</u>		<u>dz</u>	<u>dʒ</u>		
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>ʃ</u>		
	<u>voiced</u>	<u>v</u>	<u>z</u>	( <u>ʒ</u> )		
<u>Approximant</u>	<u>central</u>			<u>j</u>		<u>w</u>
	<u>lateral</u>		<u>ɭ</u>	<u>ʎ, jɭ</u>		
<u>Rhotic</u>			<u>r ~ ɾ</u>			

## Laterals

It is believed that Old Catalan had two lateral palatal phonemes. One, /ʎ/, was written as ⟨ll⟩ and has remained unchanged. The other, reconstructed as /jɭ/, came from the Latin groups C'L, G'L, LE, and LI; written as ⟨yl⟩ and ⟨il⟩, it never appeared in initial position. It has merged into /ʎ/ in most dialects but into /j/ in a few dialects.<sup>[5]</sup>

Around the 12th century, word-initial /l/ became /ʎ/, but it continued to be spelled as ⟨l⟩ until the 15th century.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Labiodentals

/v/ began to merge into /b/ in some dialects around the 14th century, a process called betacism.<sup>[7]</sup> Now, the distinction is maintained only in Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and southern Tarragona.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Vowels

Vowels of Old Catalan<sup>[9]</sup>

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	<u>i</u>		<u>u</u>
<u>Close-mid</u>	<u>e</u>	<u>ə</u>	<u>o</u>
<u>Open-mid</u>	<u>ɛ</u>		<u>ɔ</u>
<u>Open</u>	<u>a</u>		

The system features a modification of the original Proto-Romance /e/ and /ɛ/. First, /e/ was centralized to /ə/ and then, /ɛ/ was raised to /e/. In Modern Central Catalan, stressed /ə/ has been fronted to /ɛ/, thus partially inverting the original Proto-Romance distribution still found in Italian and Portuguese. Balearic varieties still keep stressed /ə/.

It is assumed that during the preliterate period, all Catalan dialects featured a weak realization of the pretonic vowels. Around the 13th century, pretonic /a/ and /e/ began to be confused in writing in the Eastern dialects, and the confusion later spread to all unstressed instances of /a/ and /e/, a process that was almost complete by the 15th century.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

Final post-tonic /e, o/ were lost<sup>[12]</sup> during the formation of Catalan. According to some historic studies,<sup>[13]</sup> final nasals were velarised and assimilated before being lost in Modern Catalan: [ ' pãŋ ] → [ ' pã ] → [ ' pa ]).

## Orthography

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Current Catalan orthography is mostly based on mediaeval practice, but some of the pronunciations and conventions have changed.

- Accents (such as ⟨´⟩ and ⟨`⟩) and the diaeresis ⟨¨⟩ were used less frequently.
- The tilde ⟨~⟩ was sometimes used to replace ⟨m⟩ and ⟨n⟩.
- The interpunct ⟨·⟩ was often used to indicate elision and hyphenation.
- ⟨c⟩ in front of ⟨e⟩, ⟨i⟩; ⟨ç⟩ and final ⟨z⟩ (also spelled ⟨ç⟩, and ⟨s⟩ after merging with /s/) represented /ts/ instead of modern /s/: Old Catalan / ' tsɛl/, modern *cel* / ' sɛl/
- ⟨ch⟩, ⟨ph⟩, ⟨rh⟩ and ⟨th⟩ represented /k/, /f/, /r/ and /t/. Mediaeval scribes often confused them with ⟨c⟩, ⟨f⟩, ⟨r⟩ and ⟨t⟩
- ⟨ch⟩ represented /tʃ/, especially in the Valencian variant
- ⟨ch⟩ at the end of the word was used for /k/, instead of modern ⟨c⟩, until the early 20th century; for example, modern *amic* was written *amich* ("friend").
- ⟨yl⟩, ⟨il⟩, were used for the phoneme /j/. In the modern language, the sound has come to be pronounced /ʎ/ or /j/ depending on the dialect. Both are now written as ⟨ll⟩: modern *mirall* was written *mirail* or *mirayl* ("mirror"), cf. Latin *miraculus*.
- Initial /ʎ/, which appeared in the 12th century from initial /l/, was written as ⟨l⟩ until the 15th century to maintain connections with Latin etyma.<sup>[6]</sup> In the modern language, it is written as ⟨ll⟩: e.g. modern *llibre* was written *libre* ("book"). Cf. Latin *liber*.
- ⟨h⟩ was frequently omitted: modern *haver* was written *aver* ("to have"), cf. Latin *habere*.
- ⟨h⟩ was sometimes used to mark hiatus: modern *veí* was written *vehi* ("neighbour")
- Final unvoiced obstruents were often written as such. In the modern language, the characters for their voiced counterparts may be used to reflect Latin etymology: modern *fred* was written *fret* ("cold"), cf. Latin *frigidus*.

## History

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### Early Middle Ages

By the 9th century, the Catalan language had developed from Vulgar Latin on both sides of the eastern end of the Pyrenees mountains (counties of Rosselló, Empúries, Besalú, Cerdanya, Urgell, Pallars and Ribagorça), as well as in the territories of the Roman province and later archdiocese of Tarraconensis to the south.<sup>[14]</sup> From the 8th century on, the Catalan counts extended their territory southwards and westwards, conquering territories then occupied by Muslims, bringing their language with them.<sup>[14]</sup>

This phenomenon gained momentum with the separation of the County of Barcelona from the Carolingian Empire in 988 AD.<sup>[14]</sup> By the 9th century, the Christian rulers occupied the northern parts of present-day Catalonia, usually termed "Old Catalonia", and during the 11th and 12th centuries they expanded their domains to the region north of the Ebro river, a land known as "New Catalonia".<sup>[14]</sup> During the 13th century, the Catalans expanded to the Land of Valencia and across to the Balearic Islands and Alghero in Sardinia.<sup>[14]</sup>

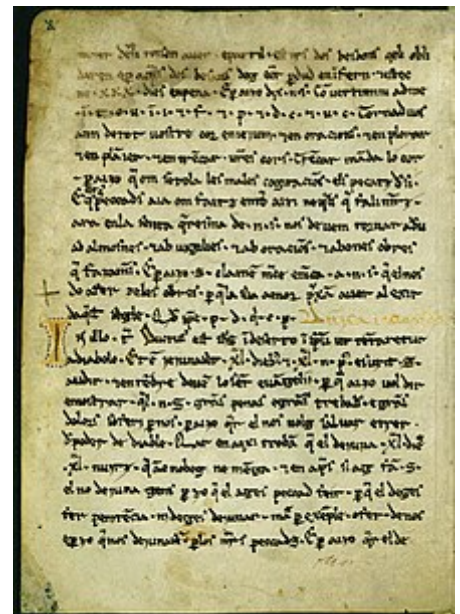
According to historian Jaume Villanueva (1756–1824), the first attested Catalan sentence is thought to be found in an 8th-century manuscript from Ripoll that has since been lost. It was a whimsical note in 10th- or early 11th-century calligraphy: *Magister m[eu]s no vol que em miras novel* ("my master does not want you to watch me, newbie").<sup>[17]</sup>

During the 11th century, several feudal documents (especially oaths and complaints) written in macaronic Latin began to exhibit elements of Catalan, with proper names or even sentences in Romance.<sup>[18]</sup> Of special historical and linguistic importance is the *Memorial of Complaints of Ponç I*<sup>[19]</sup> (ca. 1050–1060), featuring whole sentences in Romance.<sup>[18]</sup> By the end of the 11th century, documents written completely or mostly in Catalan begin to appear, like the *Complaints of Guitard Isarn, Lord of Caboet* (ca. 1080–1095), or *The Oath of peace and truce of count Pere Ramon* (1098).<sup>[18]</sup> Catalan shares many features with Gallo-Romance languages, which are mostly located in France and Northern Italy. Old Catalan diverged from Old Occitan between the 11th and 14th centuries.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Late Middle Ages

Catalan lived a golden age during the Late Middle Ages, reaching a peak of maturity and cultural plenitude.<sup>[14]</sup> Examples of this can be seen in the works of Majorcan polymath Ramon Llull (1232–1315), the *Four Great Chronicles* (13th-14th centuries), and the Valencian school of poetry which culminated in Ausiàs March (1397–1459).<sup>[14]</sup>

By the 15th century, the city of Valencia had become the center of social and cultural dynamism, and Catalan was present all over the Mediterranean world.<sup>[14]</sup> The belief that political splendor was correlated with linguistic consolidation was voiced through the Royal Chancery, which promoted a highly standardized language.<sup>[14]</sup>



*Les Homilies d'Organyà* (12th century), first written in Catalan.

### ***Greuges of Guitard Isarn, Lord of Caboet*** (ca. 1080–1095)<sup>[15][16]</sup>

Hec est memoria de ipsas rancuras que abet dominus Guitardus Isarnus, senior Caputense, de rancuras filio Guillelm Arnall et que ag de suo pater, Guilelm Arnall; et non voluit facere directum in sua vita de ipso castro Caputense *che li comannà. Et si Guilelm Arnal me facia tal cosa que dreçar no'm volgués ho no poqués, ho ssi's partia de mi, che Mir Arnall me romasés aisí com lo'm avia al dia che ad él lo commanné.* Et in ipsa onor a *Guillelm Arnal no li doné negú domenge ni establiment de cavalier ni de pedó per gitar ni per metre quan l'i comanné Mir Arnall.*

Lines 1–4. Passages in Catalan in italics



The outstanding<sup>[14]</sup> novel of chivalry *Tirant lo Blanc* (1490), by Joanot Martorell, shows the transition from medieval to Renaissance values, something that can also be seen in the works of Bernat Metge and Andreu Febrer.<sup>[14]</sup> During this period, Catalan was what Costa Carreras terms "one of the 'great languages' of medieval Europe".<sup>[14]</sup> The flowering of the Renaissance was closely associated with the advent of the printing press, and the first book produced with movable type in the Iberian Peninsula was printed in Valencia in 1474: *Trobes en llaors de la Verge maria* ("Poems of praise of the Virgin Mary").<sup>[14]</sup>

## See also

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- History of Catalan
- Limousin language
- Old Provençal

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13. Duarte & Alsina (1984:206–207)
14. Costa Carreras 2009, pp. 6–7.
15. Veny 1997, pp. 9–18.

16. The source book has reconstructed elided fragments and written out abbreviations in full, like *et*. Capitalization, the use of u-v, i-j, and c-ç have all been regularized. Accents apostrophes and diaeresis have been added according to the modern orthography. Used punctuation according to modern usage.
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